



# Department of Justice

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## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RESOLVES LAWSUIT ALLEGING RACE DISCRIMINATION AT LIVONIA, MICHIGAN APARTMENT COMPLEX**

WASHINGTON - The Department of Justice has reached a \$725,000 settlement, resolving allegations that the owners and operators of Apple Ridge Apartments (formerly known as Whispering Woods) in Livonia, Mich. have discriminated against African Americans seeking to rent apartments at the complex.

"Fair and equal access to housing is a basic right—one that should not be denied to any American because of their race," said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Civil Rights Division is committed to continuing its vigorous enforcement of all the fair housing laws."

"Discrimination against those seeking access to fair housing on the basis of race is not only against the law, it is contrary to the societal norms that exist in 21<sup>st</sup> century America," said Stephen J. Murphy, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. "The time should be long past that racial discrimination determined the availability of apartments and housing in our country. Should we uncover future evidence of such conduct in my district, this Office will investigate, litigate where necessary and take action to stop it."

The Department of Justice's lawsuit, which was handled jointly by attorneys from the Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office, was filed in April 2006 and was consolidated with a suit filed by the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit one year earlier. The complaint alleged that General Properties Company, d/b/a/ Whispering Woods and now Appleridge Apartments, and one of its owners, Elliott C. Schubiner, engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against African-American applicants for tenancy.

Under the settlement, which must still be approved by the court, the defendants will:

- Pay \$350,000 in damages and attorney's fees to the Fair Housing Center;
- Pay \$330,000 in damages to twenty-one persons who were discriminated against because of their race at Whispering Woods/Appleridge Apartments;
- Pay \$45,000 in a civil penalty to the United States; and
- Use an independent property management company to handle the rental and application process.

The settlement will be court enforceable for at least five years.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales announced Operation Home Sweet Home, a concentrated initiative to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in America. This initiative was inspired by the plight of displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina who were suddenly forced to find new places to live. Operation Home Sweet

Home, however, is not limited to the areas hit by Hurricane Katrina, but targets housing discrimination all over the country. More information about Operation Home Sweet Home is available at the Justice Department Web site at

<http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status. Since Jan. 1, 2001, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed 230 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, 62 of which have alleged discrimination based on race. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line (1-800-896-7743), email the Justice Department at [fairhousing@usdoj.gov](mailto:fairhousing@usdoj.gov), or contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

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